



September 2016

EMPOWERING TIMES



THINKING ALOUD

Stress and the City - Meeta



PODIUM

Interview with Dr Chandrashekhar R. Desai
Director - Shiatsu Research & Training Institute



WE RECOMMEND

The Gene: An Intimate History -
Siddhartha Mukherjee
Reviewed by Rohan Menon



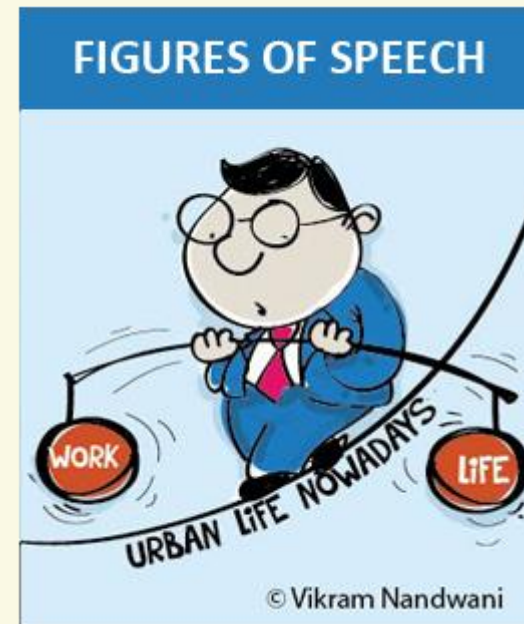
STANDING OVATION

JK Maass Foundation
Tamil Nadu



Dear Reader,

Urban life has indeed improved our standard of living but not without its own set of consequences. Yet, none of us would want to be the last to finish the race in the fast paced world that we live in amid cut throat competition. Are we living in denial when we ignore telling signs of our body and mind which sometimes hints at an imbalance thus resulting in an alarming rise of stress related illnesses among other ailments? The truth is bitter. While juggling between work, life and family, stress might take a toll on one's well-being and the very thought of balancing these spectrums can be a daunting task. Maintaining this crucial balance has been a much debated topic of discussion over the years with various studies and forms of art being made available to the urban man to 'unplug' and ease out. The importance of a healthy balance was also reflected through the declaration of June 21 as International Yoga Day by the United Nations.



You would not be surprised to know that our urban lives gives us little time for practising various forms of stress management techniques. Google's long-term study, gDNA aimed at learning how to improve well-being, cultivate great leaders, and better understand how happiness affects work. The study revealed two main approaches to work-life balance: 'Segmentors' were those who could draw a line between work stress and the rest of their lives, allowing them to not think about work, when away from work. On the other hand, 'Integrators' were those who could not 'unplug' themselves from work to maintain a balance. Sadly, only 31% of Googlers were Segmentors, while 69% were Integrators. However, not all is lost. India Inc. is walking that extra mile to ensure that her employees are not all stressed out. There are lots of reports of start-ups and established companies conducting 'Friday Fun' at offices to de-stress their workforce.

ET this month talks about the '**Urban Life Today and the Need for Mind-Body Balance.**' While we all are victims

of the stress filled urban life that we enjoy, the adage 'an apple a day, keeps the doctor away' may not always come to the rescue. Why wait for the worst to take place when we can reap the benefits of practising a balance between the various realms of our lives? Hopefully this issue of ET will help encourage you to take a deep breath, slow down and imbibe some best practices to ensure that you get back and are in 'balance', rather than leaving this activity only to the confines of our resolution list, every year.

Meeta in the **Thinking Aloud** section highlights some ways to de-stress and how to make time to attain the much needed balance required in our urban ways of life.

On the **Podium**, we discuss the importance of mind-body balance with **Dr Chandrashekhar R. Desai**, Director - Shiatsu Research & Training Institute. An avid practitioner of Vedanta and Zen Buddhism, Dr Desai deliberates on the causes of stress in our urban life, its consequences and the various ways we can ensure a balance of our minds and bodies.

We have often blamed our genes for all our faults - including being high-strung and constantly under stress. In the **We Recommend** section, **Rohan Menon** takes a look at a recent work on genes and offers his thoughts on the book, '**The Gene: An Intimate History**' by Siddhartha Mukherjee. The author takes his readers on a journey through his own family's legacy of mental illnesses, describes the development of medical genetics, culminating to some thought on the new gene editing technology that has the potential to alter the course of human evolution.

In **Standing Ovation**, Tamil Nadu based **JK Maass Foundation** aims to change the lives of children with cerebral palsy and mental illnesses.

In **Figures of Speech**, **Vikram's** toon 'balances' work and life!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) & [Google+](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

THINKING ALOUD

Stress and the City

- Meeta

In recent times, one hears a lot about work life balance, managing stress, wellness and so on and so forth. The statistics on stress related diseases is alarmingly on the rise and so are the deaths associated with it. Also, stress impacts relations and these days, we often hear of broken marriages, bad relations at home and work. These lead to low productivity, emotional imbalance and depression. When people talk about stress management, I ask them a very simple question and that is, "What hobbies do you pursue?" The answers are sadly common. Everybody has some exciting hobby which they had been pursuing in the past or would like to do so in the future but most of them do nothing in the present. The culprit is of course time. I find it amazing that people blame time because with advanced technology and in this app based world, one can have a lot of time in hand if they want. The question thus arises is that, is it about time or is it about priority? How do we find time to do what is important? Let me share my thoughts and experiences on how I manage stress in the city.

I mentioned advanced technology, which is not only a boon but also a bane. Thanks to technology, one is hit by magnitudes of information on a daily basis which is the underlying cause of stress. But in today's world, one cannot survive if you are ignorant to what's happening around you and so it becomes essential to keep up with the trend. Lifestyles have changed so drastically that I never ever imagined that there would be a time in my life when I would have to manage with 4-5 hours of sleep and grab a nasty and not tasty bite, have a "working lunch" - (a concept I dislike) or go for breakfast and coffee meetings!! At the same time, since I love what I do, these are the nuances one has to face. There was a time when I struggled with all of this and along the way I learnt that in life there is always a solution for everything and I eventually managed to find ways to de-stress.

After understanding a bit on Emotional Intelligence, it dawned upon me that the journey starts with self-awareness. One technique that has helped me to do this is meditation. Training your mind to focus on breathing

and letting go - sounds easy, but is not. Initially there is a lot of restlessness, impatience and a feeling of boredom but slowly over time it takes you to the next level. I've been practising some or the other forms of meditation for the last 23 years. It has increased my self-awareness tremendously and as a result of this my Emotional Quotient has increased, decreasing my stress levels.

Yoga is something else that helped along the way. Having done a 7-day yoga camp from the Yoga Institute in Mumbai, I realised that yoga is not only some form of exercise, but a way of life. And once it becomes a way of life, one can practice it during hectic travels and schedules as well. There are some simple and excellent techniques that help. One of my favourites is resting the head against your seat and meditating while travelling. A great de-stressor!

Yet another powerful influence in my life is that of Nichiren Buddhism. This is a wonderful practice that empowers individuals towards a positive global change. The core practice of the Soka Gakkai (Value Creation) International is chanting "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo" along with sharing the teachings of Buddhism with others. This helps people to overcome their problems and also help others to overcome the same. The faith in this practice has helped millions of people around the world to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of others, eventually leading to the objective of world peace. The monthly discussion meetings are a key part of this practice where people share experiences and motivate others to confront their challenges. The key concept of this practice is human evolution which enables the inner transformation of individuals to create a positive change in themselves and ultimately in the society as well.

Besides all this, things like cooking, music, dancing, reading and playing with my sons, who are with me all the time (my two dogs) and so many more activities, keep me going in this urban way of life. On a positive note - there is also good stress, not only the bad one. So the key is to change the bad stress to the good one to keep you going.

[back to top ^](#)

PODIUM

Interview with Dr Chandrashekhar R. Desai Director - Shiatsu Research & Training Institute



Dr Chandrashekhar R. Desai

Dr Chandrashekhar R. Desai is an ENT surgeon and an alumnus of the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune. He has been practising and teaching Shiatsu, a form of Acupressure, since 1980. Since 1993, Dr Desai has been regularly conducting workshops on Stress Management for corporates in India and in more than ten other countries including Germany, Switzerland, England, Holland, Nepal, Korea and so on. He has a regular agenda in some of the European countries.

Three years after the success of his Stress Management workshops, in the year 1996, Dr Desai also began teaching Self-Management, which deals with Identity, Purpose of Life, Values, Contentment, and Redefining Success.

Dr Desai has been studying Vedanta and Zen Buddhism since 1982. He applies the knowledge gleaned from these studies in his daily life and this forms the basis for the workshops that he designs. He also invests a lot of time studying the human mind as a science and from a counsellor/therapist's point of view. Besides Acupressure, Dr Desai is also experienced in practising other forms of therapies such as Reiki, Pranic Healing, Kinesiology, Crystal Healing, Acupuncture and Colour Puncture.

Dr Desai has written and published more than 20 scientific papers which were read and published at various national and international conferences. He has developed a technology in health assessment and health enhancement, which was accepted and given recognition at the National Conference on Scientific Validation and Technical Evaluation of Ancient Medical Systems (SVTEAMS), held in New Delhi in February 2006. This is the first such pioneering movement in the world and Dr Desai has three patents pending on the technology of health enhancement.

Dr Desai is a prolific writer and has authored several books in English and Marathi. Some titles that have been published include Shiatsu - The Art and Science of Acupressure (the second edition of which is already on the stands); Love is... (The first of a series of value education books, published by Macmillan India Ltd.); and Prem Mhanaje... (The Marathi version of Love is...), 'Beyond Balance' and 'Anandmarg'. He also contributes articles to leading publications in English and in Marathi on a wide range of topics that cover health to stress management and philosophy.

A man of many interests, Dr Desai's hobbies includes tennis, cycling, trekking, music and reading, on which he draws to enrich his work. In fact, it is very difficult to segregate his hobbies and serious work, for he puts 100% of himself into everything that he does. He has cycled the entire length of South Korea, while pursuing the study of Zen and Shiatsu. He has cycled through five European countries in 1998, with his daughter who was then fourteen years old.

Dr Desai is the Director of the Shiatsu Research and Training Institute (SRTI) and Sat-Ayushi (Truly Alive) Institute of Enhanced Living, a venture by SRTI. He is the Vice President of Navkshitij, an NGO committed to the cause of rehabilitation of Mentally Challenged Adults. Dr Desai is associated with Jehangir Hospital, Pune, which works in conjunction with the Apollo Group of Hospitals. He the director of 'HPS Wellness'- a company that is developing the Global Positioning System (GPS) of Health taking an individual from illness to wellness and further to excellence .

ET: Stress has taken a toll on people everywhere. What are the various causes of stress in our urban life and what is its consequence?

CD: The human race today is splitting into smaller and smaller units spreading all over the world. Communities and joint families have given way to emigrant, nuclear families where the husband and wife work in different places and 'catch up' with each other on weekends. Add to that the fast pace of life and cut throat competition, where one has to run faster and faster to even remain in the same place; and we have a perfect formula for a stressful life. The rising cost of living, medical expenses, new diseases cropping up every day, water, air, food and sound pollution add their bit to the fray. The consequence of the all this stress is seen in the form of failing health, intolerance and increasing rate of divorces, suicides, addictions, vandalism and crime; together they

increase the feeling of insecurity and further stoke the fire of stress. Out of desperation, we reach out to our one trusted friend in the wilderness of life - the internet, only to be hit by the tsunami of information overload. By the time we wade through the labyrinth of information we are convinced that we are in deep trouble; there are more ways of dying than we had ever imagined!

Today there is no feeling of 'we', it is each man for himself; no one you can trust to give you covering fire or to watch your back. If ever, this is the time to re-discover our inner strength and our inherent capacity to regain and retain our mind/body balance. In this way, we can reach the calm in the eye of the whirlwind raging around us and be at peace with ourself.

ET: What is the importance for the need for the balance of the mind and body?

CD: It is true that we are living in stressful times. What is equally true is that we are also living in the most interesting era of human existence. We are constantly surrounded by opportunities begging for attention as well as by opportunists ready to take advantage of a single lapse of judgement on our part. There are well trained teams of advertisers who have identified our soft under belly in the form of greed, guilt, sex and fear. On the one hand, they are the devil incarnate, constantly whispering in our ears, tearing us apart between our fears and desires. On the other hand, well-disguised among these whispers, lie the very opportunities that we have been looking for. It is very easy to be swept off our feet, take the wrong turn and land in deep trouble and hence it is very important to be balanced and ready to strike at the right time.

We are navigating our way minus a compass, through uncharted waters, full of submerged reefs, treacherous currents and lurking predators - towards the Promised Land. According to Kahlil Gibran, reason is the keel of our ship and passion the strength of our sails. Passion without reason will end us shattered on a reef; reason without passion will leave us aimlessly drifting around. This is the time we need a well-balanced mind and body; a balance between reason and passion. We have to be calm and balanced in order to recognise the proper opportunity, take a firm grip on it and muster the courage and strength to bring it to fruition. At the same time, we need to keep ourselves out of harm's way. That makes it mandatory for us to learn to keep our mind and body balanced.

ET: You have been studying and practising various forms of stress management techniques and have conducted workshops on Self-Management. What are the benefits of these forms of stress relieving

techniques?

CD: A well-balanced human being is like a finely tuned string instrument. A slack string is out of tune and too tight a string becomes strident. For more than two decades, we experimented with a horde of stress management techniques that would help a person to achieve the right amount of tension; we called it eustress. We were quite disappointed to find out that most stress management techniques had a very short shelf life. We knew that we were missing something vital. Then one day it struck us that what we are trying to attain is not static but dynamic equilibrium. It is the very dynamism that is responsible for the equilibrium. To our dismay we saw that all of us were chaotically racing around but without any direction or purpose. But what is the purpose of life? Could there be a common purpose or is it different for each one? Can we identify the purpose of life?

We went back to the drawing board and structured our first ever, workshop on 'Purpose of Life'. It worked like a miracle. We empowered participants to identify their purpose of life; they discovered their pole star and a compass to steer themselves with. Our 'Self-Management' and 'Mind/Body Balance' workshops helped people to stay on course and even on keel. We were pleasantly surprised to find out that steering by the pole star and managing to stay on course is all we have to do; stress manages itself, we do not have to manage it. The effect of this strategy lasts for as long as you allow it to.

ET: Can you please suggest some best practices that our readers can inculcate at home and workplace to ensure that we do not lose out on our mind-body balance?

CD: The technique for stress management that I use for myself and quite successfully too, is Anapan meditation as taught in Vipassana. Whenever I feel I am stressed I bring my attention to my breath and focus on that small area on the upper lip where I can feel the breath coming in and the breath going out; bringing myself back to the present. This technique is based on the simple truth that, unless you are sitting in a room which suddenly catches fire, there is no stress in the present. Stress always lies in wait for you either in the future in the form of - 'what if', or in the past in the form of - 'should've, could've, would've.' If one does not stray and dwell in the past or the future one would not be so stressed. Bringing yourself back to the present is the best stress buster.

Having said this, I would like to share with my friends a sentence that inspired and motivated me. This is what it said -

'Till we have identified something that we are ready to die for, we have nothing to live for'.

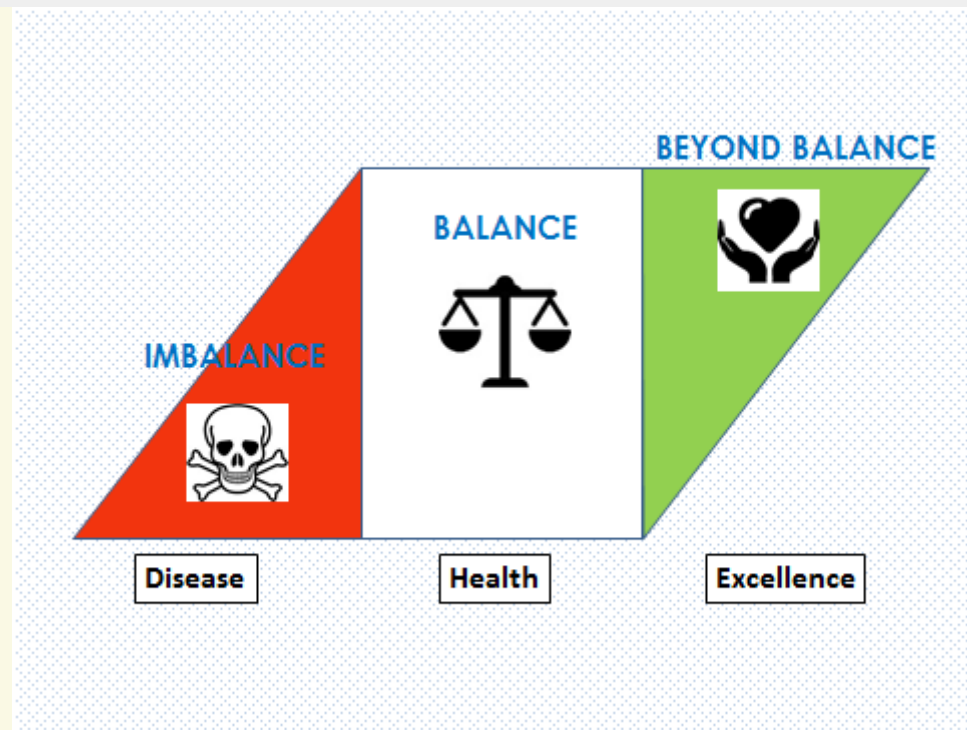
There is a simple exercise that we give our participants at the beginning of our workshop. This is the first step towards identifying the purpose of life. Each participant is made to write his/her own epitaph or obituary. I would like to request each one of you to do this exercise. Write your obituary, see how far you are from it today and thank the Lord for giving you the time to catch up with your epitaph; start working towards it. Whenever you hit a fork or a dilemma, steer by your pole star - your epitaph. It will help you clear your doubts and confusion and give you the moral courage and conviction to make a decision and see it to fruition. Your on-line guide will help you make the choice that steers you towards your purpose of life and away from the stress of decision making. The best way to manage stress is to avoid it. Remember, as you go along, if you find something more worthy of your life effort, you always have the luxury and liberty to change the obituary, as long as you live.

P S: Please don't show your obituary to anyone; it is about you, by you and, for you. It is your personal, on-line guide.

ET: How do you define wellness and how does one quantify the average health status of an individual?

CD: Recently we have started a company. We have named it - HPS Wellness. HPS Wellness (Patent Pending) like the GPS - Global Positioning System, is the Human or Health Positioning System. We have created the roadmap of the life and health of human beings and a tool to establish your co-ordinates on this map. Our aim is to navigate an individual from illness to wellness and further towards excellence in his/her social, economic and health status. The concept is based on over two decades of research. We first establish where you are on the map of human destiny as compared to the average and the best. We then show you the most probable prognosis of your condition, the options available and the changes that need to be made in order to avail of the chosen option. We also provide you with a means of serial reassessment.

We believe that imbalance is disease; balance is health or wellness and beyond balance is excellence. Going beyond balance is the right and responsibility of each human being; striving to excel in your chosen field creates the dynamism necessary to ensure the dynamic equilibrium for wellness.

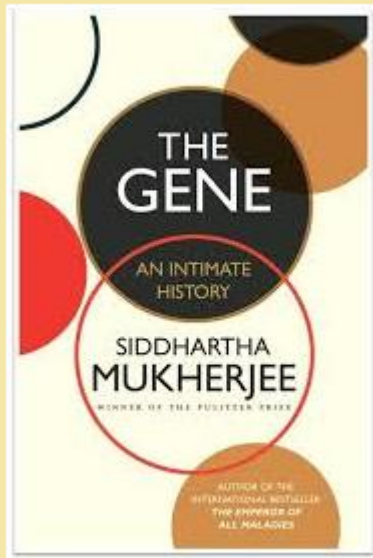


[back to top ^](#)

WE RECOMMEND

The Gene: An Intimate History

- Siddhartha Mukherjee



It is hard to categorize "The Gene" as a generic science book - filled with pages of difficult words and old scientists toiling away to discover things that may be ignored by most of the world. A significant portion of the book is dedicated to one of the most revolutionary scientific notions that has literally changed the way the world perceives itself, and for good reason. Evolution, and consequently the field of genetics, caused a tectonic shift in the visualization of not only man but the world and to most people it may seem that these concepts are just that - theories that only the intellectuals believe in order to seem smart. However, as Siddhartha Mukherjee deftly explains, there are so many things that intertwine with our lives in ways we may not even know.

The book covers a vast scale of information - the history of the idea of evolution and genes beginning with the ancient Greek philosophical musings of Aristotle and Pythagoras, to the revelations of Mendel and Darwin, to Watson and Cricks' discovery of the elusive double helix, and finally to Bergs' designs about the future of epigenetics; looking forward at the bright future of gene therapy as well as looking back at the dark turns of Nazi-propelled eugenics. The book chronicles the history of these amazing discoveries and much more, with Mukherjee leading the reader through a story of innovation and ideas. His writing helps eloquently explain the various thoughts and concepts so that even the novice admirer of biology is able to understand and appreciate the gravitas of the subject at hand.

The book traces the inception of the idea of man, what is his origin and how does life continue. Over the

centuries, these ideas meet its critical components - evolution and the gene, and slowly as we move into the 20th and 21st century, how these microscopic things called DNA help shape us into who we are. With amazing experiments like the Human Genome Project and embryonic stem cell research issuing a new age in scientific research, we are also left with perhaps one of the most important ethical dilemmas humans have ever faced - the use of this technology to change ourselves, and change that which makes us human.

The book also highlights a personal story for Mukherjee (as he states at the beginning), describing an intimate history with a look into the lives of his relatives. By giving us examples of family members afflicted with various genetic defects like schizophrenia and depression, Mukherjee helps show us how the concepts we read can affect us on such a personal level and how sometimes even without us knowing - these small things (in this case quite literally) can have massive consequences, shaping the way we look at not only ourselves but even those closest to us.

"The Gene" is by no means a quick read, filled with history and scientific thought that spans over a thousand years. But it is a good thing, allowing the author to elaborate and introduce several topics that will spark an interest in many unknown areas previously hidden from the reader. The book, much like any scientific advent, requires patience, and celebrates its discoveries all the while leaving us (and those doing the research) with the most important scientific question - where do we go from here?

I would recommend this book to anyone with an interest in not just biology and genetics, but anyone with an appreciation for world history and the ingenuity of nature. As Richard Dawkins once eloquently called evolution and the processes involved, it truly is the Greatest Show on Earth!

[back to top ^](#)

STANDING OVATION

JK Maass Foundation - Tamil Nadu



The JK Maass Foundation is an NGO based in Tamil Nadu, founded by Mr M Sudhakaran with the goal of providing adequate resources for physical rehabilitation for people of all backgrounds in order to benefit People with Disabilities (PWD), particularly children suffering from afflictions like cerebral palsy and mental retardation.

Founded in 2001, Mr Sudhakaran left his job as a physiotherapist at a multispecialty hospital after seeing the vast inequality in resources available to people with less money. With the support of his parents and after meeting all necessary government requirements, he opened his first clinic in Madurai - a small 10 feet room with just one patient. But word spread about his work and soon the project expanded, eventually garnering more support and lead to the foundation of a special school. Now the Foundation is dedicated to helping PWD in rural areas of Madurai and Ramnad districts and soon hope to establish a large institute to benefit all people with disabilities in Tamil Nadu.

Some of the services they provide include:

1. JK Physiotherapy Hospital and research centre - Well equipped and staffed with a team of experts, the hospital provides therapy to people with physical ailments and also helps spreading awareness about the prevention and rehabilitation needed for mobility-related issues
2. Able Kids special school - A school for children with cerebral palsy, mental retardation and autism, recognized by the Tamil Nadu Government, which provides training and care for the children to help cultivate their self-esteem and confidence to approach the world around them
3. Community based Rehabilitation - the program helps create awareness about Government welfare schemes, income generating sources and skill development training and rehab services.

To know more about this Foundation, please visit - <http://jkmaassfoundation.org/>.

A Standing Ovation is what JK Maass Foundation deserves for their noble cause!

[back to top ^](#)

THROUGH THE LENS



© 2016

Rupesh Sabara

In-house photographer, **Rupesh Balsara** takes a close up shot of the Asian Fairy Bluebird which is a medium-sized bird spotted in forests across tropical southern Asia, the Himalayan foothills and north-east India. This bird lives in pairs or in small groups of 6-8 birds. Unlike most forest birds, they breed in the middle of the densest and most humid areas of the forest.

Empowered Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.

<http://www.empoweredindia.com>

101, Lords Manor, 49, Sahaney Sujan Park, Lullanagar, Pune – 411040, Maharashtra, India

[FEEDBACK](#)

[ARCHIVES](#)

[UNSUBSCRIBE](#)

©The ELS Lotus logo is trademark of Empowered Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.

©2016 Copyright Empowered Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd. (ELS). For private circulation to clients and well-wishers of ELS. While ELS endeavors to ensure accuracy of information, we do not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage to any person resulting from it.